COMMERCE COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING

February 14, 2013

PROPOSED BILL - HB 5014

AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STAE FOR THE SHUBERT THEATER IN NEW HAVEN

TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
CAPA - SHUBERT THEATER

Good morning members of the Committee. My name is John Fisher and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Association for the Performing Arts (CAPA) and the Shubert Theater in New Haven.

The Shubert Theater will celebrate its 100th anniversary on December 11, 2014. Looking to the Shubert's next 100 years, we envision a vibrant force for the performing arts in New Haven and the region, and as an economic cornerstone of downtown New Haven. In order to achieve our goals, significant upgrades and maintenance to the 100 year-old Shubert Theater building are needed.

The Shubert Theater nearing its Centennial, continues to be one of Connecticut's and the nation's most legendary theatrical resources.

Known as "The Birthplace of the Nation's Greatest Hits," the Shubert has hosted over 600 pre-Broadway shows and more than 300 World Premieres including **"Oklahoma", "A Streetcar Named Desire," "My Fair Lady"** and **"The Sound of Music."** Many legendary stars received their first critical acclaim appearing at the Shubert including Marlon Brando, Katharine Hepburn, James Earl Jones, Julie Andrews, Sidney Poitier and Robert Redford.

With the 100th anniversary of the Shubert Theater in 2014, this has provided CAPA with a once in a lifetime opportunity to raise funds to undergo and complete the renovations, and address significant deferred maintenance issues, so that we may create an efficient and user friendly theater for our community.

- Since the re-opening of the Shubert in 1984, the theater has provided an economic impact of over $300 million. With a direct annual impact of over $15 million *(Quinnipiac University study)*.
- Using Results Based Accountability, on average the Shubert draws over 100,000 patrons from the Greater New Haven area and generates between 4 and $5 million in ticket revenues each year.
- The Shubert is responsible for over 3,000 hotel room nights a year generating $385,000 in hotel bookings and nearly $70,000 in hotel taxes that is direct tax revenue for the state.
- Currently we employ over 200 part time event staff.. Annually, the state receives $50,000 in payroll taxes from Shubert full and part time employees, and an additional $75,000 in sales and entertainment tax revenue for the state.
- Parking accounts for 30,000 cars a year and $255,000 in income for the city.

- Since 1984, the education and community outreach programs have served over 100,000 people comprised of at-risk students, family groups and senior citizens from the Greater New Haven area.
- Each year our community ticketing programs provide more than 90 not-for-profit community organizations with over 1,600 free tickets.
- School residencies and student performances serve 3,000 students each year.

The Shubert Theater has not had a major renovation in over 30 years. The theater in its current state cannot continue to operate at the same level without capital improvements. Funding is needed to preserve the stability of the physical structure and continue to operate without physical hazards to the public.

As part of the needed renovations, greater access by community groups will in effect create a regional *Performing Arts Center*. This evolution of the reach of the Shubert represents a renewed business model that provides for continued operation, the opportunity to diversify revenue sources, and opportunities to support the arts.

In 2009, CAPA in partnership with the City of New Haven's Office of Economic Development completed an architectural feasibility study by Greg, Weiss and Gardner.

The purpose of the study was to define and evaluate critical physical alterations to the facility which would assure its functionality and address current and future space needs. This study determined the total cost of repairs and renovations that CAPA will be undertaking are approximately $7 million.

The campaign is composed of two components, the first for physical capital needs and improvements to the theater building and the second for an endowment to create financial stability for this community treasure.

The goal for this project is $12 million and is based on the estimated expenses of $7 million for facility improvements and renovations and $5 million to create a new endowment to sustain the building for years to come.

We ask the Committee and the State of Connecticut to invest in this project to complete these necessary repairs and renovations and to provide the community with access to the Shubert Theater for the next 100 years.

Thank you very much.

SHUBERT
NEW HAVEN

John Fisher
Executive Director, Shubert Theater

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ADDITIONAL SUPPORING BACKGROUNG AND FACTS:

The Shubert Theater has not had a major renovation in over 30 years. The theater in its current state cannot continue to operate at the same level without capital improvements. Funding is needed to preserve the stability of the physical structure and continue to operate without physical hazards to the public.

Physical threats to the preservation of the theater:

- Structurally, the building has not been re-pointed since the original 1914 craftsmanship.
- Loose brick and mortar have resulted in water penetration, which threatens the historic plaster restoration that was done in 2009.
- Leaks in the front plaza are causing damage to the structural steel of the building, and threaten equipment in the mechanical room below.

Repair to the plaza and leaking stone façade of the building would stop the damage as well as offer an opportunity to restore the building to complement the historic district.

Mechanical system deficiencies:

- The current HVAC system is inefficient, costing up to $80,000 annually just to service. It often does not work correctly, impacting the comfort and experience of patrons and future ticket sales.
- Exterior ductwork needs replacement and rooftop gas lines need repair—both integral to operation of the building and for safety.

Security and safety deficiencies:

- The rear fire escape needs replacement due to its gradual deterioration, which once advanced, would cause closure of the theater.
- ADA access for wheelchairs and fire system upgrades for the hearing impaired need to be done in the lobby, office, and stage areas to increase accessibility for patrons.
- The lobby and ticket office need to be redesigned to improve patron access, and improve security from vandalism and theft.
- The air intake system at street level and room systems need to be secured against terrorist threats to protect the frequent prominent attendees.

As part of the needed renovations, greater access by community groups will in effect create a regional *Performing Arts Center*. This evolution of the reach of the Shubert represents a renewed business model that provides for continued operation, the opportunity to diversify revenue sources, and opportunities to support the arts. Other identified needs focused on reconfiguring the Shubert's physical spaces to serve the community. These needs include:

- A new orchestra shell and dance spaces to augment and serve the City and local arts groups growing needs.
- A street-level intimate versatile performance space to be utilized by local arts groups and the Shubert to present diversified offerings and to expand on our economic impact downtown.

- Redesign and improvements to the loading dock area that will insure worker and public safety.
- Office space for local arts groups.

Over the past three years CAPA and the Shubert Theater has had many successes, here are a few of the highlights:

- **Increased Community Access and Outreach**
  As stated previously, recent education research has demonstrated the benefits of arts education, especially dance. CAPA's most extensive education program is a residency of the Pilobolus Dance Company, now in its 16th year in New Haven. Over the past couple of years, CAPA has expanded this program from 3 to 8 weeks and increased the frequency of reinforcement of the programs philosophies throughout the school year.

  Over the past year the *MOVIN'* program has expanded to a group of at-risk middle school girls at Truman School. This was the first time ever we introduced this program to a group of girls. In response to the program, Vice Principal Idris Trotman made the following comment: *"Some of these students don't know anything beyond the 7 blocks they live in. By the Shubert bringing this program to them it shows them that they are worth it and they are special. It says to them that there is more out there and to reach for whatever they want."* In 2011-12, we are about to expand again to reach another group of at-risk girls at Wexler Grant School as part of their after school programming.

- **Expanded Economic Impact**
  During the last 10 years CAPA has built on the Shubert's proud history as a premiere Broadway-presenting theater by working with Broadway producers to utilize the theater as a venue to build sets, coordinate the technical aspects of the production and rehearse the cast of new nationally touring productions. In recent years the Shubert Theater was used for the build of the national tours of **Twelve Angry Men** (2006), **Jersey Boys** (2007), **The 39 Steps** (2009), **A Chorus Line** and **HAIR** (2010) and most recently **The Color Purple** (2012).

  During a period of 2–4 weeks prior to each show, the theater is occupied by the show's director; set, designers and creative teams; technical and production staff; and cast members. In addition to the regular work schedule for a Broadway show run, 169 local stage employees are employed during the pre-production period totaling on average 7,000 + work hours. Upwards of 80-110 show personnel are housed in hotels throughout New Haven area and patronize area restaurants and contract with local catering facilities for their on-site needs. It is estimated that 167 non-theater related jobs were created because of the existence of the Shubert Theater. The total economic impact during the pre-production period ranges from $850,000 to $1 million (depending on the size and scope of the production).